

## Becoming Amish: A Family's Search for Faith, Community and Purpose

**Jeff Smith**

Dance Hall Press (Jun 7, 2016)

Softcover \$17.99 (256pp)

978-0-9973733-0-1

*Smith's insightful book is an honest and respectful look at the joys, and the costs, one American family experienced as they sought to align their lifestyle with their deepest beliefs.*

Jeff Smith's *Becoming Amish* is the intimate and revealing story of a family that was led by their religious convictions to leave mainstream culture and embark on a search for a faith, church, and community that expressed their beliefs in daily life.

When Jeff Smith visited his old friend Bill Moser and his family after a time apart, he was surprised to find Bill bearded and dressed in plain blue denim pants held up by suspenders, and his wife, Trisha, wearing a cap and plain ankle-length dress. Their six children were similarly attired. Bill asked, "Do you think we've gone crazy?"

Smith describes his friends as having been a "part of Detroit"—the part that hung onto hope for a city that was in serious decline. Both Bill and Trisha had graduated from Detroit area universities and had enjoyed careers that allowed them an artsy, creative-class lifestyle. But something was missing. Their search for that "something" eventually led them to a deeper commitment to living out the teachings of Jesus in their daily lives.

Moving to Michigan's Thumb Area to take up farming, they built a house as funds were available. Contact with the area's Amish community and further study convinced them that much of what they had come to believe on their own was shared, and lived, by the Amish.

The Mosers' fifteen-year journey was not always easy. After living in several Amish communities, struggles led them to leave Michigan and the Old Order Amish for a less strict Amish-Mennonite community in Missouri. Bill Moser said of his experience, "I didn't want to die always wondering, What if I had done something else? I did the something else," citing his escape "from the kingdoms of this world into God's kingdom, expressed and lived out in church community."

While not intended as a guide to becoming Amish, Smith's insightful book is an honest and respectful look at the joys, and the costs, one American family experienced as they sought to align their lifestyle with their deepest beliefs.

KRISTINE MORRIS (Fall 2016)

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